

**INFORMATION SHEET ON RAMSAR WETLANDS**

1. **Country:** France
2. **Date:** 1.3.93, revised on 26.9.94
3. **Ref:** 7FR015
4. **Name and address of compiler:**  
DIREN DES PAYS DE LA LOIRE  
75, rue des Français Libres - BP 2197  
44204 NANTES CEDEX 02
5. **Name of wetland:**  
Basses Vallées Angevines (49) Marais de Basse Maine et de Saint Aubin
6. **Date of Ramsar designation:** 1 February 1995
7. **Geographical coordinates:** 47°29'-47°40'N 00°23'-00°34'W
8. **General location:**  
Département de Maine et Loire - area to the north of Angers
9. **Area:** 6,450 ha
10. **Wetland type:** M
11. **Altitude:** 16 m
12. **Overview:**  
- Vast alluvial plain encompassing the confluence of the Mayenne, the Sarthe and the Loir and part of the Val de Maine. The flood plain of these watercourses is covered by grassland whose vegetation consists of various communities of wet-meadow plants and sparse rows of ash and willow.
13. **Physical features:**  
- The rivers have created a broad alluvial valley, covered to a depth of up to 5 metres with modern alluvia of a muddy sand texture; these form a low terrace and constitute a wetland of particular importance. The Basses Vallées Angevines are drained by the Mayenne, the Sarthe and the Loir, which flow together to the north of Angers to form the île Saint Aubin (600 ha) and the River Maine, which in turn flows for 11 km before joining the Loire. The hydrology of the area is determined by the tributary streams and, because of the gentle runoff slopes, is affected by the proximity of the Loire.
14. **Ecological features:**  
- The wetland is a stopover point of international importance for several Anatidae species and

wading birds on the spring migration from their wintering grounds to their breeding grounds in northern and north-eastern Europe. Noteworthy species include the Greylag Goose, Northern Pintail and Black-tailed Godwit. It is also a wintering ground of national and international importance for the White-fronted Goose and the Pochard. The Basses Vallées Angevines are of international importance for the 'combattant varié' [=species of Ruff ?] and are the principal nesting site of the Corncrake in France and one of the most important of such sites in western Europe (285 pairs).

- Noteworthy plant communities include:

1. in the lower, long-submerged areas, the *Gratiolo-oenanthetum fistulosae* community, consisting of very short hygrophilous grasses such as the *gratiola*, *Cardamine parviflora*, *Cerastium dubium*, *Stellaris palustris* and *Inula britannica*; and
2. in the middle to upper, more recently submerged areas, the *Oenanthetum mediae* community, consisting of the more mesophytic plants of the genus *Fritillaria*.

These two communities are concentrated in the Loire valley (flood plain). Their ability to survive is therefore closely linked to the future of the Basses Vallées Angevines.

**15. Land tenure/ownership of:**

**(a) site:**

- Private property with the exception of the area constituting the rivers' 'lit mineur' [= lower bed], which is owned by the public rivers authority.
- Communal property (900 ha) and property of the Fondation pour les Habitats de la Faune Sauvage (Association Départementale + Nat. Fondation = 180 ha). Property of LPO (150 ha), the Fédération de Pêche, INRA and the State.

**(b) surrounding area:**

- Private property.

**16. Conservation measures taken:**

- Listed in ZNIEFF, Basses Vallées Angevines (2056)
  - type 1 - Prairies de la Baumette 2056 0001
  - type 1 - Lac de Maine 2056 0002
  - type 1 - Wet-meadows to the north of Angers 2056 0003
- Listed in ZICO (PL 06) 6,450 ha
- Listed in the Habitats Directive

Thanks to a Community environment project (ACE/LIFE), LPO has been able not only to acquire parcels of land and carry out detailed studies on the Corncrake and the flora, but also to conclude management agreements.

Agri-environmental measures (Art. 19 OGAF/Environment), involving 5,000 ha, are making it possible to conclude management agreements with farmers aimed at maintaining environment-friendly farming practices.

Agriculture/forestry zoning. To counter the relentless spread of poplar plantations, a collective zoning project has been undertaken. This has been facilitated by a prefectorial decree temporarily halting poplar-planting and instituting the relevant administrative procedure (public inquiry - consultation of communes affected).

The management plan takes account of the Angevine urban area.

Hunting reserve on the Ile St-Aubin.

A steering committee exists to supervise all that happens in the Basses Vallées Angevines. It has already been briefed on the Ramsar procedure.

- 17. Conservation measures proposed but not yet implemented:**
- Permanent nature reserve.
  - Biotope decree for selected sites envisaged.
  - ZPS classification desirable.
  - Activities of the Conservatoire Régional des Rives de Loire et de ses Affluents.
- 18. Current land use: principal activities in:**
- (a) site:**
- Agriculture, forestry
  - Leisure activities - boating, amateur fishing, waterfowl hunting
- (b) surroundings/catchment:**
- Urban areas, agriculture, forestry
- 19. Disturbances/threats, including changes in land use and major development projects:**
- (a) at the site:**
- Abandonment of agriculture
  - Spread of poplar-planting
  - Over-hunting in some areas
  - Holiday-housing developments
  - Road infrastructure projects
  - 'Granulat' [= Granulite ?] excavation
- (b) in the surroundings/catchment:**
- Idem
- 20. Hydrological and physical values:**
- Vast flood plain of three rivers (Mayenne, Sarthe, Loir), attenuated at confluence with the Maine before latter joins the Loire.
- 21. Social and cultural values:**
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- 22. Noteworthy fauna:**
- Nesting birds
- Garganey: 1 to 10 pairs
  - Quail
  - Hobby Falcon
  - Corncrake: 300 songbirds in 1984  
285 pairs in 1992
  - Spotted Crake
- In grassland areas:
- Whinchat IPA FI 93.33% 1991
  - Yellow Wagtail IPA FI 40%
  - Skylark IPA FI 86.6% 1991
  - Reed Bunting IPA FI 66.6% 1991
  - Corn Bunting IPA FI = 100% 1991
  - Grasshopper Warbler IPA FI = < 25% accidental 1991
  - Sedge Warbler IPA FI = < 25% accidental 1991

Migrating and wintering birds:

- Wading birds:
  - Great Crested Grebe
  - Great Cormorant
  - Coot
  - Common Snipe: 0 to 100
  - Black-tailed Godwit: 10,000 to 30,000
  - Northern Lapwing: 3,000
  - Ruff: 100 to 1,000
  - Eurasian Golden Plover: 200 to 7,000

- Other waterfowl:

- Bewick's Swan: 0 to 10
- Greylag Goose: 0 to 800
- White-fronted Goose: 0 to 100 (6,000 in 1963)
- Northern Pintail: 400 to 4,500 (9,000 in 1962)
- Mallard
- Green-winged Teal: 150 to 400
- Northern Shoveler: 100 to 600
- Pochard: 3,500

**23. Noteworthy flora:**

(a) Plants of importance to the national heritage

- *Gratiola officinalis*, a plant of the Scrophulariaceae family, is widely distributed throughout the OGAF area and locally abundant when conditions are favourable.

It is the only officially protected species at national level.

Other species are nonetheless noteworthy because of their population levels in France.

- *Stellaris palustris*, a plant of the Cariophyllaceae family, is to be seen on the île Saint-Aubin; it is rare in France (Atlas partiel du Dupont, 1990).

- *Fritillaria meleagris*, a plant of the Liliaceae family, is to be found in significant numbers in the Basses Vallées. A species endemic to Europe, it is declining in France as a result of hydraulic developments.

- *Trifolium squamosum*, a leguminous plant of Mediterranean-Atlantic distribution, has been found in several parts of the Basses Vallées (Cheffes, Juvardeil, prairies de la Baumette).

(b) Noteworthy plant communities

The distribution of the most interesting species is determined by the topography and differs little from one valley to the next (Mayenne, Sarthe, Loir, Maine).

(b)1 - In the lower, long-submerged areas is to be found the *Gratiolo-oenanthetum fistulosae* community, consisting of very short hygrophilous grasses such as the *gratiola*, *Cardamine parviflora*, *Cerastium dubium*, *Stellaris palustris* and *Inula britannica*.

(b)2 - In the middle to upper, more recently submerged areas is to be found the *Oenanthetum mediae* community, consisting of the more mesophytic plants of the genus *Fritillaria*, known locally as 'goganes'. *Orchis laxiflora* is another typical species.

These two communities are concentrated in the Loire valley (flood plain according to the 1984 De Foucault study). Their ability to survive is therefore closely linked to the future of the Basses Vallées Angevines.

(b)3 - *Armeria alliacea-plantaginacea* and *Artemis campestris* are to be found on calciferous sand at just two sites in the Loir valley (West Villeveque and North Ecoulant). Pinewood-planting or quarrying are to be avoided at these

sites.

**24. Current scientific research and facilities:**

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**25. Current conservation education:**

- The nature centre at the Lac de Maine (soon CPIE) organizes meetings and field trips to raise awareness of the wild fauna.
- The Anjou LPO organizes field trips.

**26. Current recreation and tourism:**

- Boating is an important tourist activity.

**27. Management authority:**

- Fédération départementale des chasseurs (île Saint-Aubin)
- Fédération départementale de pêche
- LPO, which manages land acquired pursuant to the ACE/LIFE project.

**28. Jurisdiction:**

- Ministère de l'Équipement (water navigation service)
- Ministère de l'Agriculture

**29. Bibliographical references:**

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**30. Reasons for inclusion:**

1a, 1b, 1c 2a,2b,2c 3a,3b,3c